

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3644

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRUSSELS 3290

LONDON FOR COLWELL

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAIR BE

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: PAN AM REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF BELGIAN CURFEW
 REGULATIONS

REF (A) BRUSSELS 1888; (B) STATE 49613

1. SUMMARY. COORDINATED APPROACH TO MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS DISCUSSED IN REFTELS WAS UNDERTAKEN BY EMBASSY AND LOCAL PANAM OFFICE. BELGIAN CIVIL AVIATION OFFICE HAS RESPONDED THAT AFTER CONSIDERATION BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS IT HAS BEEN DECIDED THAT NO EXCEPTION TO CURFEW REGULATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR PANAM. PANAM BRUSSELS OFFICE IS SEEKING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK. EMBASSY REQUESTS ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON WHAT ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF BELGIAN CIVIL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION VANERPERREN HAS INFORMED PANAM DIRECTOR FOR BELGIUM O'GORMAN IN A LETTER DATED MARCH 28 THAT THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS HAS DECIDED THAT HE CANNOT MAKE "A SYSTEMATIC EXCEPTION IN FAVOR OF AN AIRLINE." O'GORMAN TRANSMITTED THIS DECISION TO PANAM NEW YORK, ASKING FOR GUIDANCE AS TO NEXT STEPS, BUT HE HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YET TO RECEIVE ANYTHING IN RESPONSE AS OF APRIL 10.

3. EMBASSY ALSO WROTE TO BELGIAN AUTHORITIES ASKING FOR SYMPATHETIC TREATMENT OF PANAM'S REQUEST, AND VANDERPERREN REPLIED INFORMING US OF THE MINISTER'S DECISION. THUS THIS MATTER IS REGARDED BY BELGIANS AS CLOSED, UNLESS A FURTHER INITIATIVE IS TAKEN BY PANAM OR USG.

4. COMMENT: COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER CHABERT'S POLITICAL BASE IS PARLIAMENTARY CONSITUENCY IN FLIGHT PATH OF BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. HE IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR PASSAGE OF ACT ESTABLISHING AIRPORT NOISE CURFEW. HE WOULD THUS BE MOST RELUCTANT TO APPROVE A SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION TO CURFEW REGULATIONS.

5. WE ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT BELGIANS WILL PERMIT AN EXCEPTION TO CURFEW REGULATIONS UNLESS PANAM CAN MAKE TRULY COMPELLING CASE FOR THEIR DOING SO. PANAM REQUESTED EXCEMPTION AT FIRST WITHOUT OFFERING MUCH SUPPORTING ARGUMENTATION, HOPING IT MIGHT BE GRANTED WITHOUT FUSS. IN VIEW OF IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO CURFEW BY MINISTER CHABERT, WE JUDGE IT UNLIKELY THAT REFUSAL WOULD BE REVERSED EVEN IF PANAM NOW EXPLAINED FULL BACKGROUND OF REQUEST TO BELGIANS, UNLESS THERE ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS FAVORING PANAM'S CASE OF WHICH WE REMAIN UNAWARE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY SUGGESTS DEPARTMENT DISCUSS SITUATION WITH PANAM, LET US KNOW WHAT PANAM INTENDS TO DO, AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR FUTURE EMBASSY ROLE IN THIS SITUATION. FIRESTONE

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